



*United States Attorney  
Southern District of New York*

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE  
SEPTEMBER 24, 2003

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**U.S. CHARGES MIDTOWN SOUVENIR SHOP OWNER  
WITH USING VIOLENT GROUPS FOR EXTORTION**

JAMES B. COMEY, the United States Attorney for the Southern District of New York, and PASQUALE D'AMURO, the Assistant Director in Charge of the New York Office of the FBI, announced that SHI YONG WEI, who owns a souvenir shop in midtown Manhattan, has been charged by criminal Complaint with conspiring to extort, and extorting, various victims. Specifically, a Complaint unsealed in Manhattan federal court yesterday charged SHI with violently extorting four victims in order to obtain from these victims business for SHI's store, in the form of bringing customers to SHI's souvenir shop.

As described in the one-count Complaint, SHI utilized a violent group of young men in his extortionate schemes to compel tour guides and others to lead customers to his store. According to the Complaint, in 2001, SHI repeatedly verbally threatened (and caused others to verbally threaten) the owner of a competing souvenir shop in Manhattan ("Victim #1"), telling Victim #1 that if Victim #1 did not stop lowering Victim #1's prices and stop

competing with SHI, Victim #1 would "not know how [Victim #1] would die," and that Victim #1's business would suffer.

In fact, the Complaint alleges, shortly after these threats, Victim #1's business did suffer due to the fact that groups of Asian youths (some of whom Victim #1 recognized from their attendance at a meeting between Victim #1 and SHI) came to Victim #1's store, threatening tour guides who brought their customers to Victim #1's store and taking photographs of the tour guides' vehicles. (Victim #1 later learned from several of these tour guides that their tires had been slashed.) Ultimately, the Complaint alleges, SHI demanded payment from Victim #1 to stop the interference with Victim #1's business. Victim #1 allegedly paid SHI \$1,500 in cash on two occasions. In addition, the Complaint alleges, on about July 28, 2002, after Victim #1 had opened a second souvenir store in the area, Victim #1 was physically attacked and beaten in Manhattan by a group of Asian men, including SHI.

Also according to the Complaint, in 2001, SHI repeatedly verbally threatened, and ultimately assaulted, an individual who gives tours to groups of Chinese tourists in Manhattan ("Victim #2"). Specifically, SHI told Victim #2 that if Victim #2 did not bring Victim #2's tour groups to SHI's store, Victim #2 would "have to be careful." On about June 9, 2001, the Complaint alleges, Victim #2 was escorting a group of tourists at the United Nations in Manhattan when SHI approached,

demanded that Victim #2 bring Victim #2's tour group to SHI's store, and then started beating Victim #2 in the face, head and chest. A few days later, Victim #2 learned that three Asian males came to Victim #2's office, asking about Victim #2's whereabouts and leaving the message that Victim #2 should "be careful," it was charged.

Also according to the Complaint, in about 2000 to 2001, SHI repeatedly verbally threatened another individual who gives tours to groups of Chinese tourists in Manhattan ("Victim #3"). Specifically, SHI repeatedly demanded that Victim #3 bring Victim #3's tour groups to SHI's store, threatening to slash Victim #3's tires if Victim #3 did not comply. The Complaint alleges that after one of these threats, Victim #3 in fact found Victim #3's tires slashed. The Complaint also alleges that in about February 2001, SHI approached Victim #3 and demanded money if Victim #3 did not want any "trouble" from SHI. Victim #3 paid SHI \$300 in cash for approximately seven months in 2001.

Also according to the Complaint, in about 2002 to 2003, SHI repeatedly verbally threatened an individual who owned a Chinese restaurant in Manhattan ("Victim #4"). Specifically, SHI demanded that Victim #4 steer Chinese tour groups who patronized Victim #4's restaurant to SHI's store, threatening Victim #4 with both physical harm and economic harm to Victim #4's business if Victim #4 did not comply. The Complaint alleges that as recently as September 16, 2003, SHI approached Victim #4, threatening that

if Victim #4 did not provide SHI's store with customers, Victim #4 did "not know how [Victim #4] was going to die."

SHI was presented on the charges in the Complaint before United States Magistrate Judge THEODORE H. KATZ in Manhattan federal court yesterday, and was detained. A detention hearing is scheduled before Judge KATZ for Friday, September 26, 2003, at 11:30 A.M.

If convicted on the charges in the Complaint, SHI faces a maximum sentence of 20 years' imprisonment.

Mr. COMEY praised the investigative efforts of the Federal Bureau of Investigation in this case.

Assistant United States Attorney JENNIFER G. RODGERS is in charge of the prosecution.

The charges contained in the Complaint are merely accusations, and the defendant is presumed innocent unless and until proven guilty.

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